THE MAXX
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THE MAXX™

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MAXX #4. August 1993. FIRST PRINTING. An Image Comics Group title published by Image Comics. Entire contents TM & © 1993 by Sam Kieth, all rights reserved. *"You'll read anything, huh?"* Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Sam Kieth. Send correspondence to: Sam Kieth, 4363 Hazel Avenue, Suite 1-285, Fair Oaks, California, 95628. Publishers and creator assume no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

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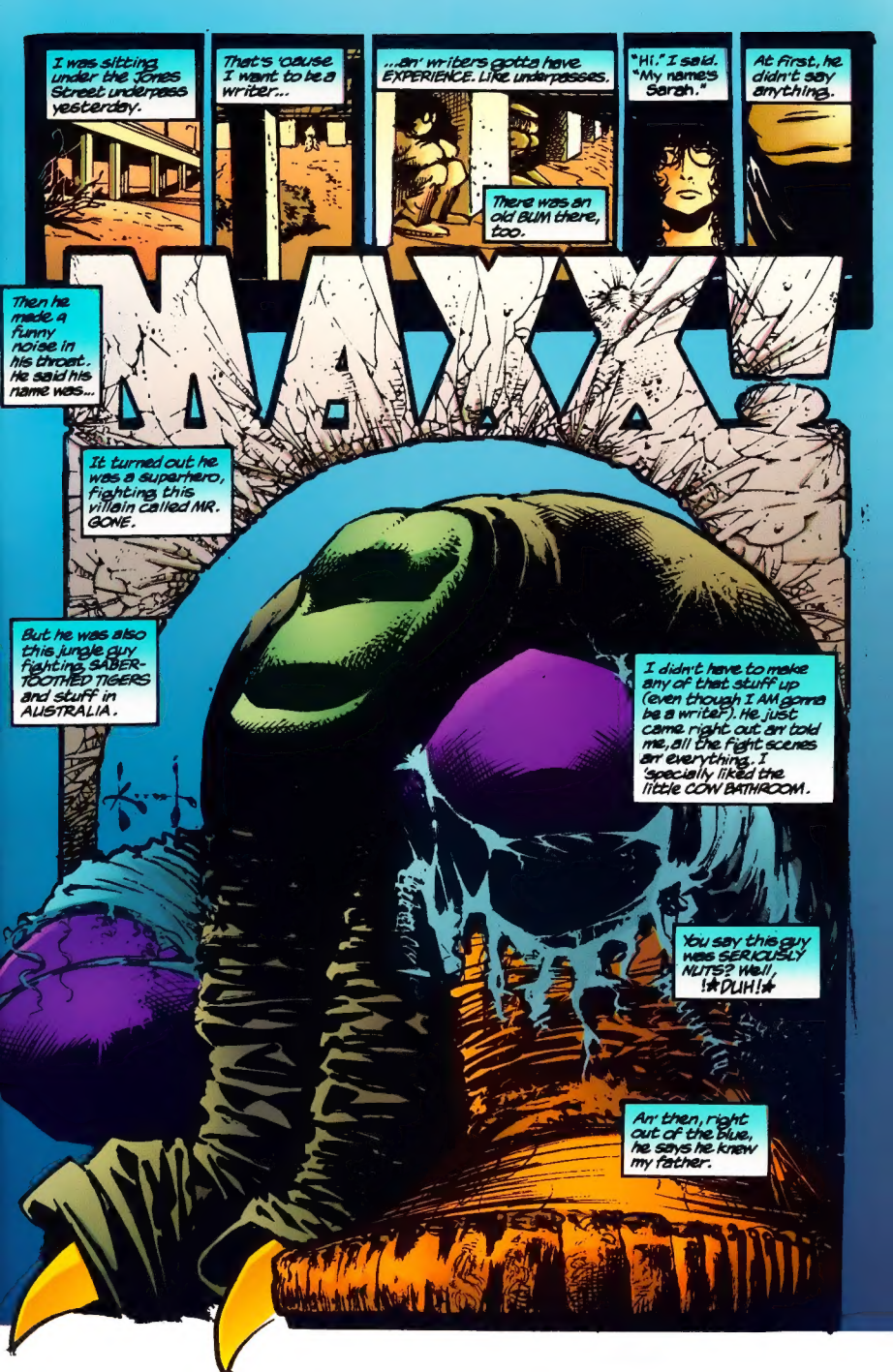
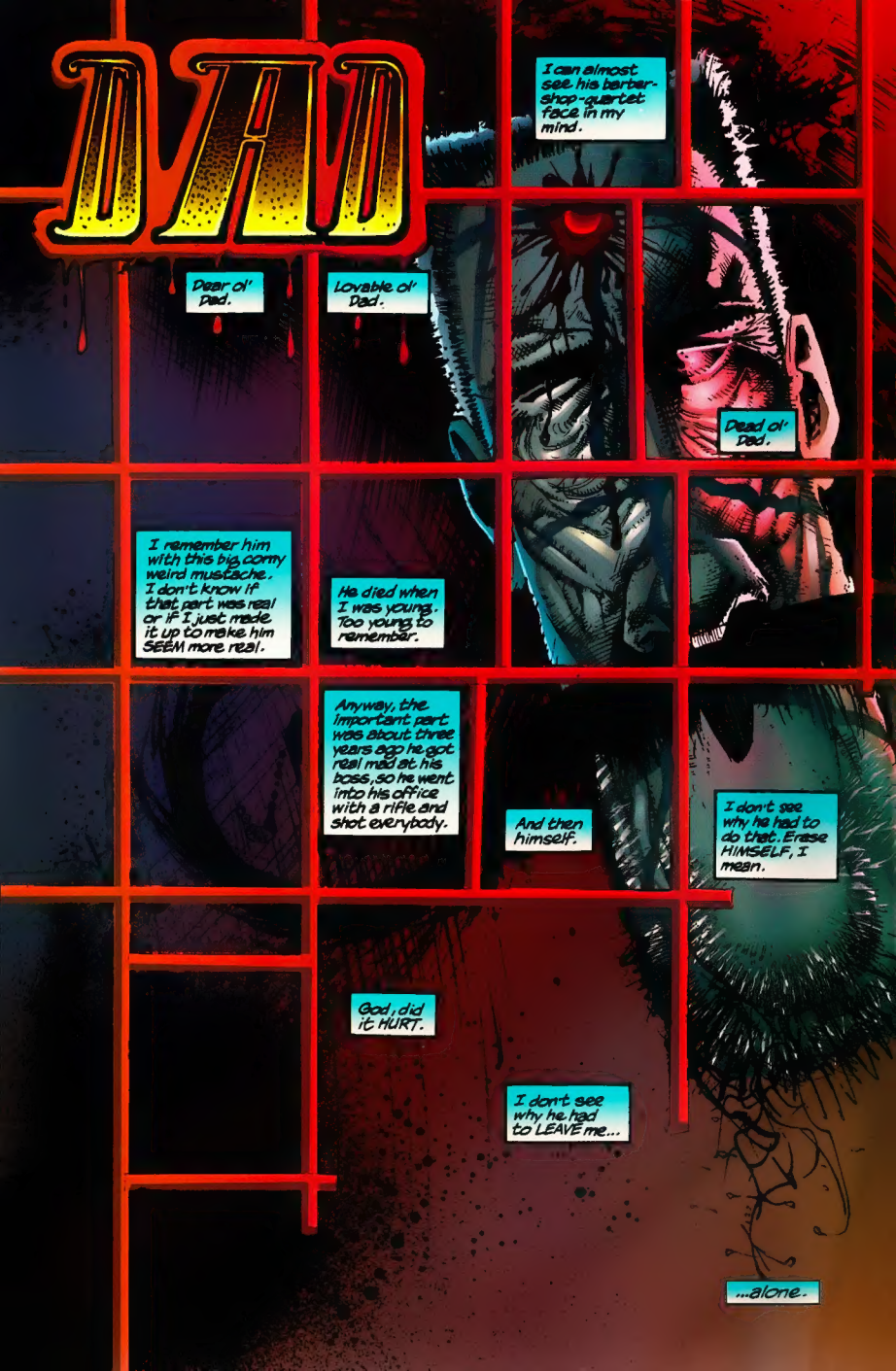
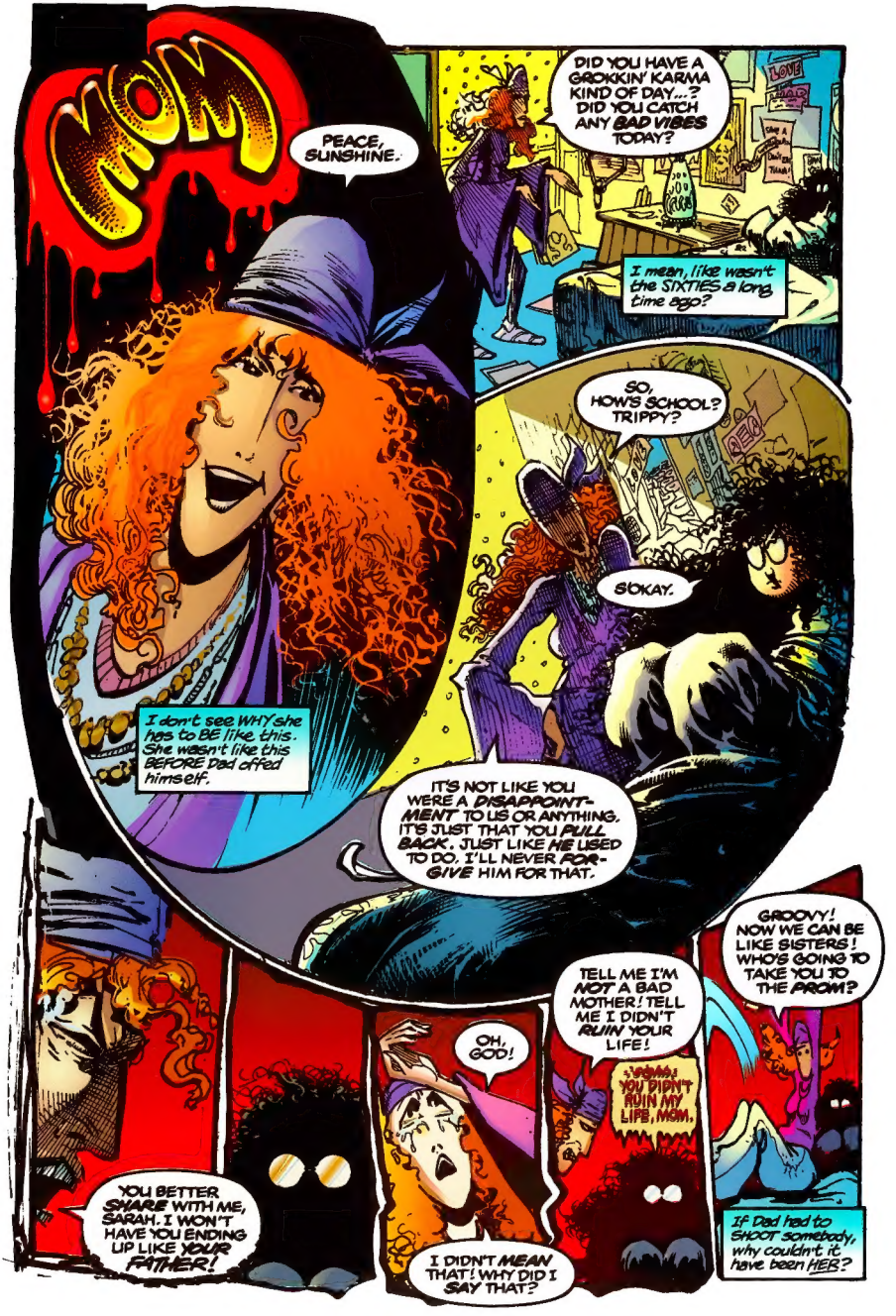
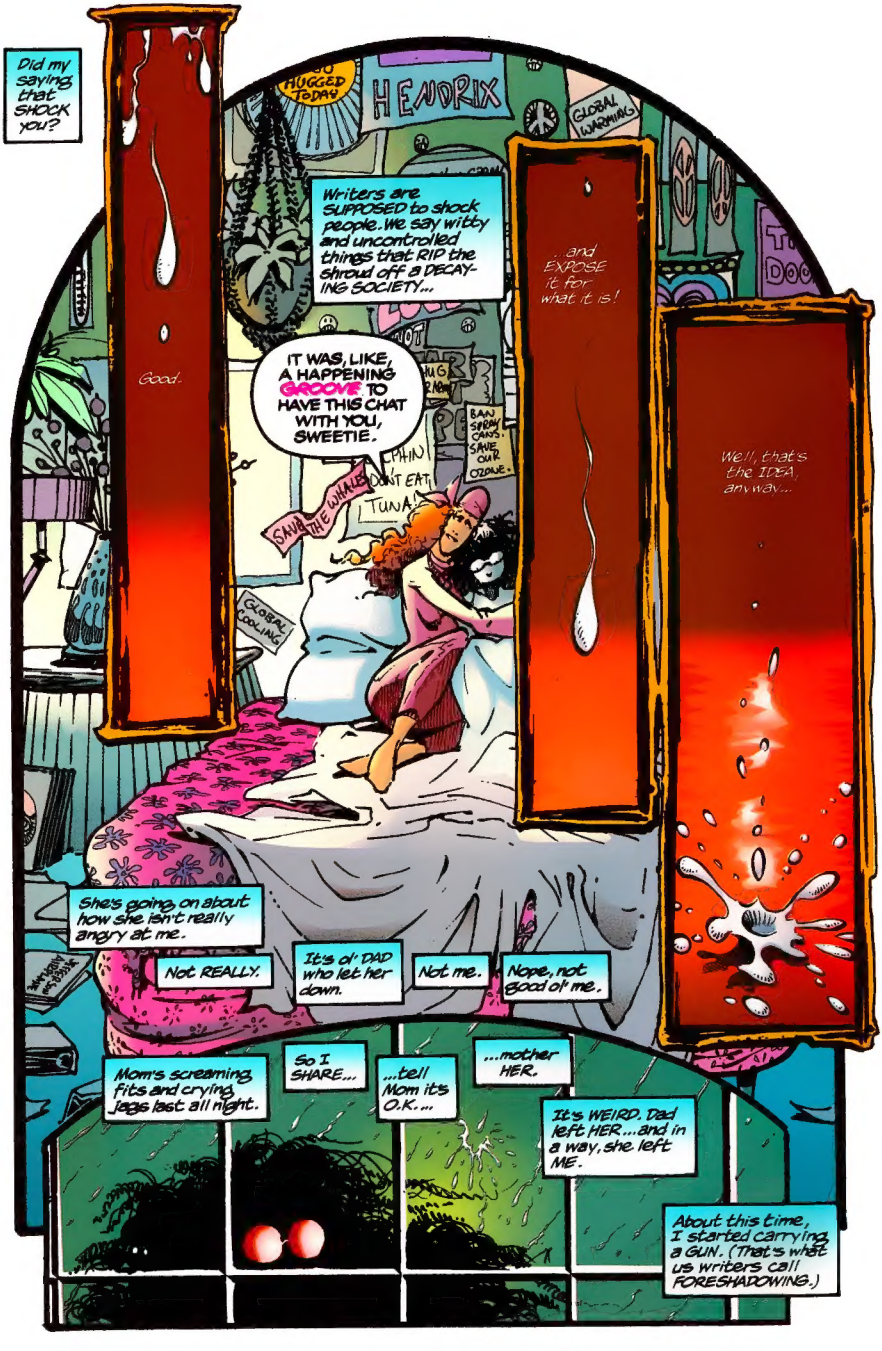
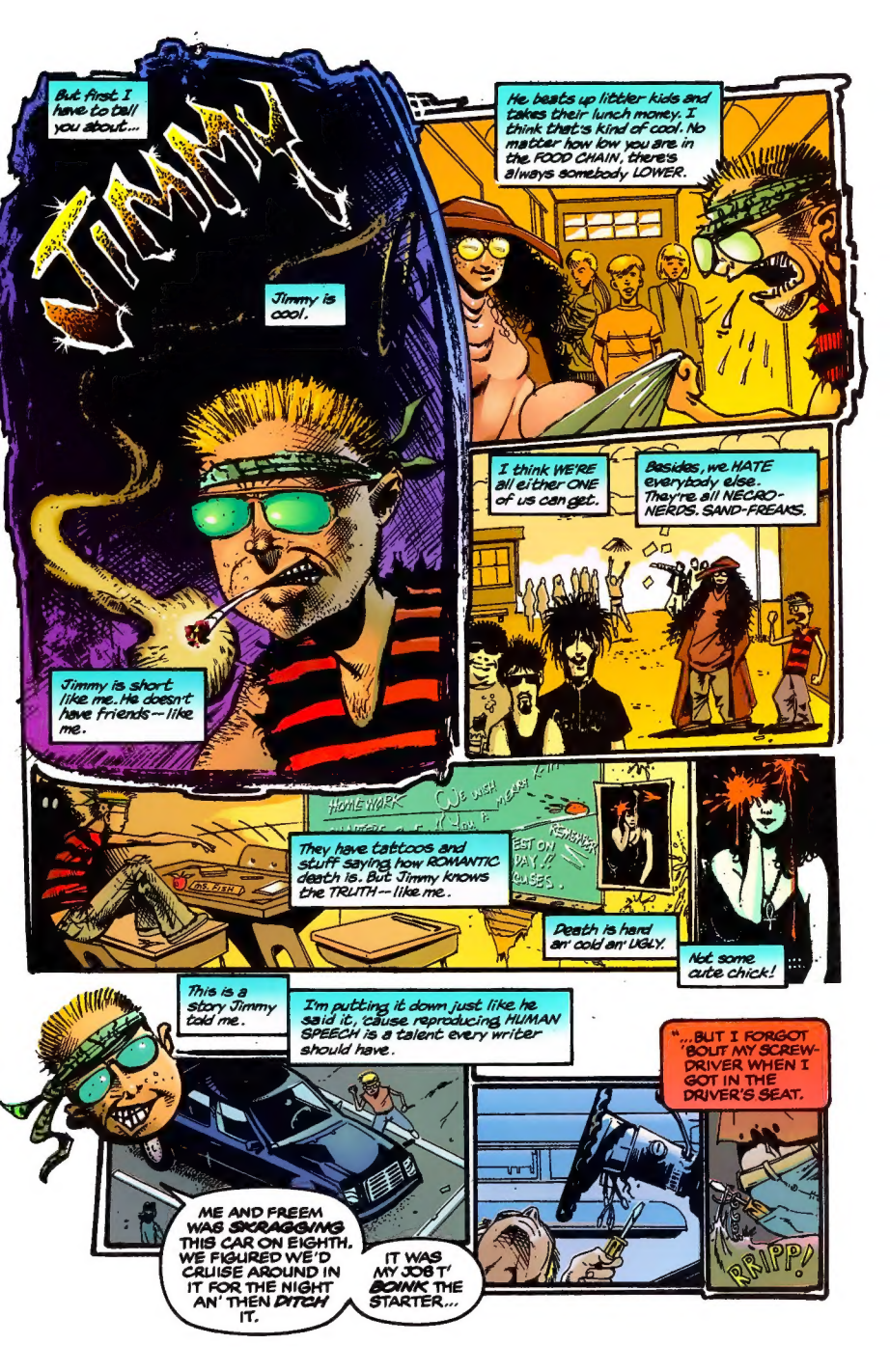
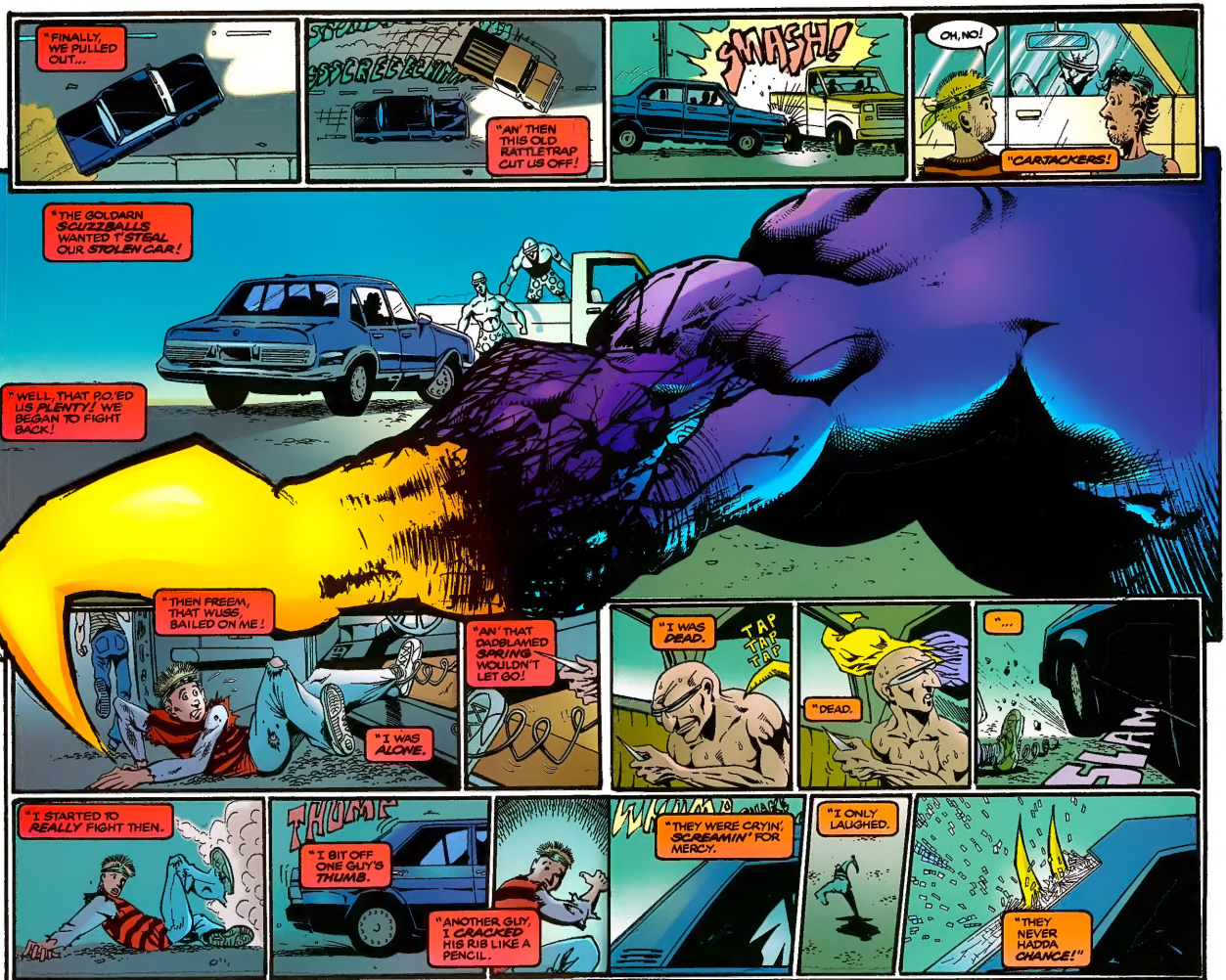

I was sitting under the Jones Street underpass yesterday.
That's 'cause I want to be a writer...
...an' writers gotta have EXPERIENCE. Like underpasses.
There was an old BUM there, too.
"Hi." I said. "My name's Sarah."
At first, he didn't say anything.
THE MAXX
Then he made a funny noise in his throat. He said his name was...
It turned out he was a superhero, fighting this villain called MR. GONE.
But he was also this jungle guy fighting SABER-TOOTHED TIGERS and stuff in AUSTRALIA.
I didn't have to make any of that stuff up (even though I AM gonna be a writer). He just came right out an' told me, all the fight scenes an' everything. I 'specially liked the little COW BATHROOM.
You say this guy was SERIOUSLY NUTS? Well, !★DUH!★
An' then, right out of the blue, he says he knew my father.


DAD
Dear ol' Dad.
Lovable ol' Dad.
I can almost see his barber-shop-quartet face in my mind.
Dead ol' Dad.
I remember him with this big, corny weird mustache. I don't know if that part was real or if I just made it up to make him SEEM more real.
He died when I was young. Too young to remember.
Anyway, the important part was about three years ago he got real mad at his boss, so he went into his office with a rifle and shot everybody.
And then himself.
I don't see why he had to do that. Erase HIMSELF, I mean.
God, did it HURT.
I don't see why he had to LEAVE me...
...alone.

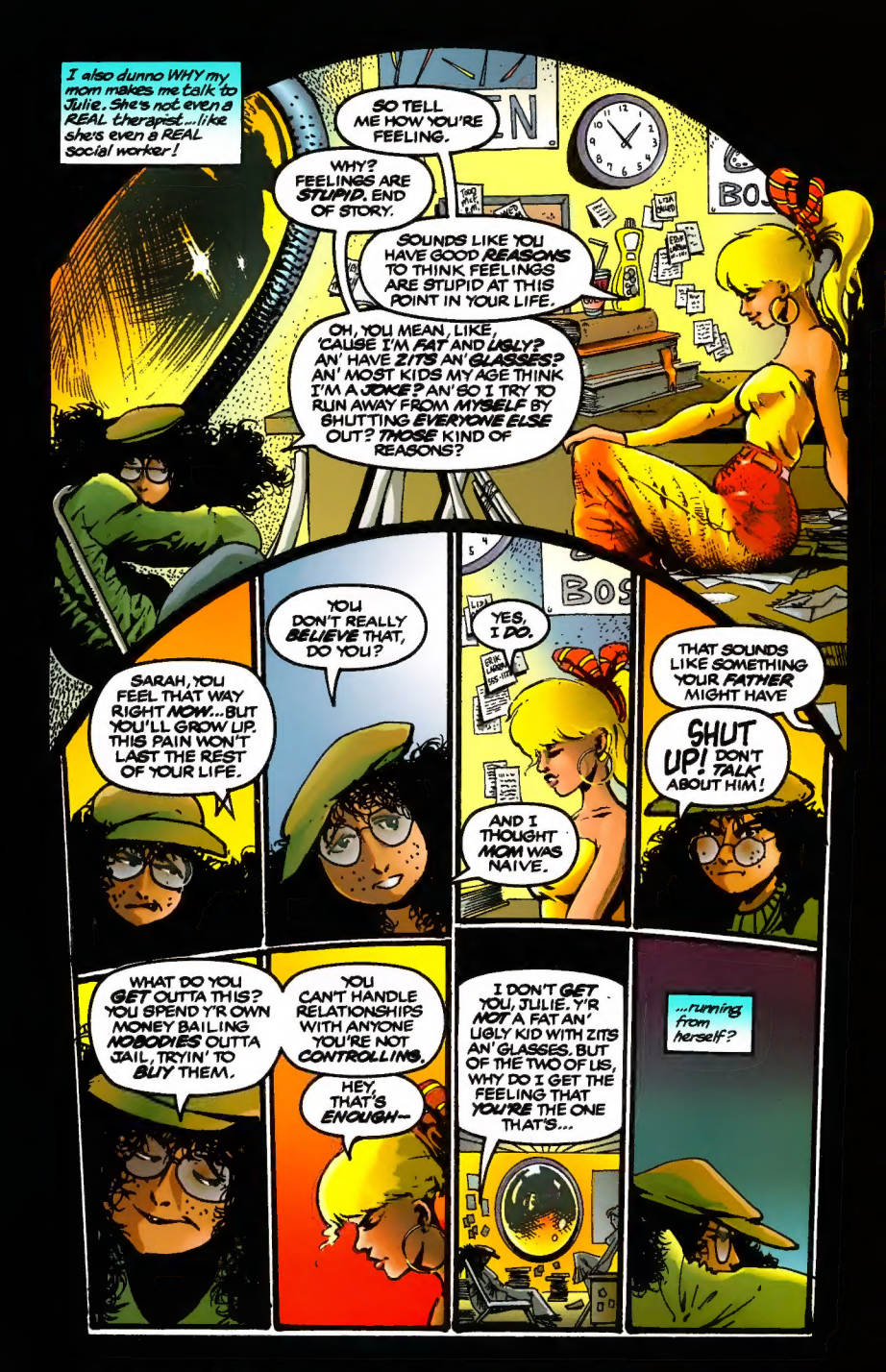

MOM
PEACE, SUNSHINE.
DID YOU HAVE A GROKKIN' KARMA KIND OF DAY...? DID YOU CATCH ANY BAD VIBES TODAY?
I mean, like wasn't the SIXTIES a long time ago?
SO, HOW'S SCHOOL? TRIPPY?
SO-KAY.
I don't see WHY she has to BE like this. She wasn't like this BEFORE Dad offed himself.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU WERE A DISAPPOINT-MENT TO US OR ANYTHING, IT'S JUST THAT YOU PULL BACK. JUST LIKE HE USED TO DO. I'LL NEVER FOR-GIVE HIM FOR THAT.
GROOVY! NOW WE CAN BE LIKE SISTERS! WHO'S GOING TO TAKE YOU TO THE PROM?
TELL ME I'M NOT A BAD MOTHER! TELL ME I DIDN'T RUIN YOUR LIFE!
YOU DIDN'T RUIN MY LIFE, MOM.
OH, GOD!
If Dad had to SHOOT somebody, why couldn't it have been HER?
YOU BETTER SHARE WITH ME, SARAH. I WON'T HAVE YOU ENDING UP LIKE YOUR FATHER!
I DIDN'T MEAN THAT! WHY DID I SAY THAT?


Did my saying that SHOCK you?
HUGGED TODAY
HENDRIX
GLOBAL WARMING
Writers are SUPPOSED to shock people. We say witty and uncontrolled things that RIP the shroud off a DECAYING SOCIETY...
...and EXPOSE it for what it is!
Good.
IT WAS, LIKE, A HAPPENING GROOVE TO HAVE THIS CHAT WITH YOU, SWEETIE.
BAN SPRAY CANS. SAVE OUR OZONE.
SAVE THE WHALES
I DON'T EAT TUNA!
GLOBAL COOLING
Well, that's the IDEA, anyway...
She's going on about how she isn't really angry at me.
Not REALLY.
It's ol' DAD who let her down.
Not me.
Nope, not good ol' me.
Mom's screaming fits and crying jags last all night.
So I SHARE...
...tell Mom it's O.K....
...mother HER.
It's WEIRD. Dad left HER... and in a way, she left ME.
About this time, I started carrying a GUN. (That's what us writers call FORESHADOWING.)

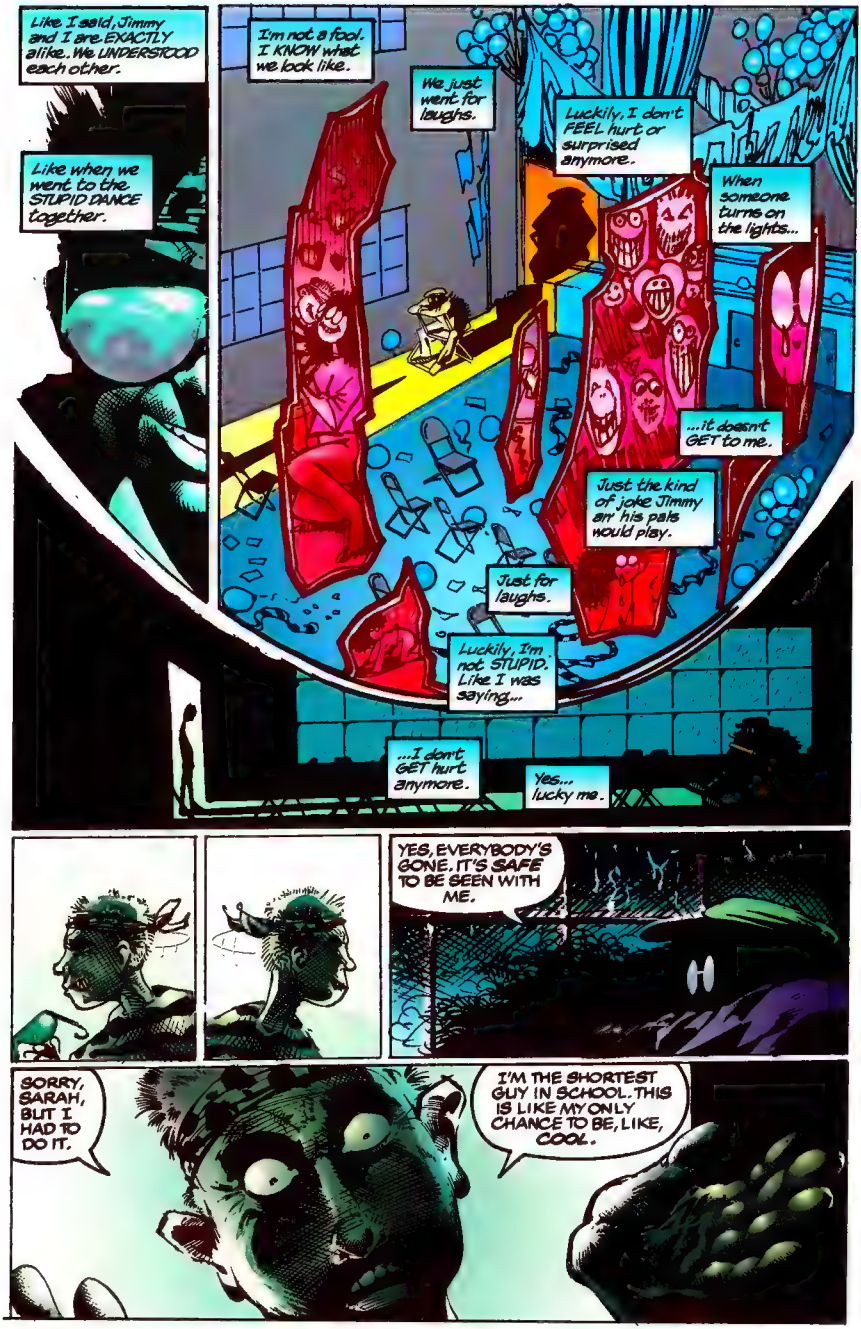

But first I have to tell you about...
JIMMY
Jimmy is cool.
Jimmy is short like me. He doesn't have friends -- like me.
He beats up littler kids and takes their lunch money. I think that's kind of cool. No matter how low you are in the FOOD CHAIN, there's always somebody LOWER.
I think WE'RE all either ONE of us can get.
Besides, we HATE everybody else. They're all NECRO-NERDS. SAND-FREAKS.
They have tattoos and stuff saying how ROMANTIC death is. But Jimmy knows the TRUTH -- like me.
Death is hard an' cold an' UGLY.
Not some cute chick!
This is a story Jimmy told me.
I'm putting it down just like he said it, 'cause reproducing HUMAN SPEECH is a talent every writer should have.
ME AND FREEM WAS SKRAGGING THIS CAR ON EIGHTH. WE FIGURED WE'D CRUISE AROUND IN IT FOR THE NIGHT AN' THEN DITCH IT.
IT WAS MY JOB T' BONK THE STARTER...
"...BUT I FORGOT 'BOUT MY SCREW-DRIVER WHEN I GOT IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.
RRIPP!

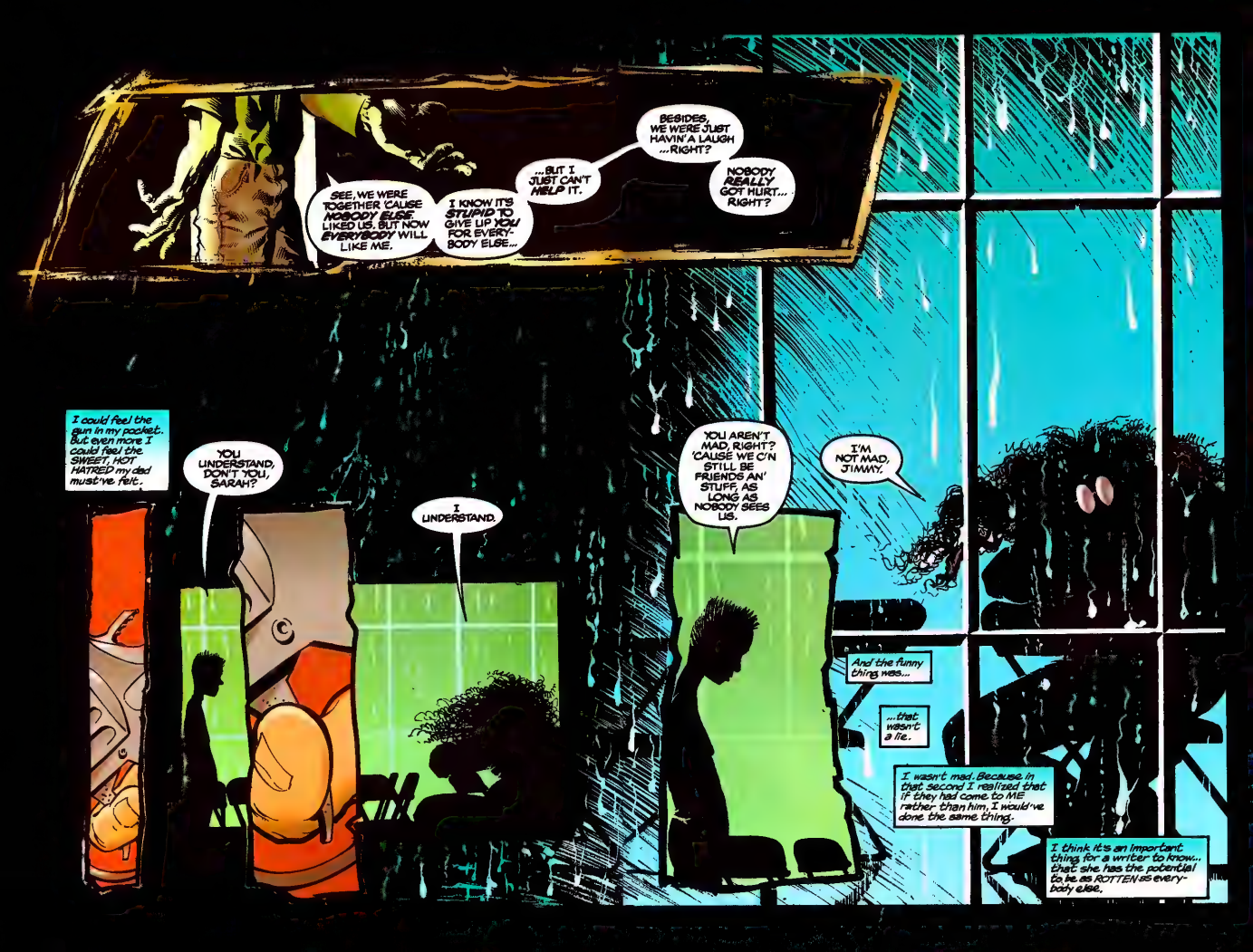

"FINALLY, WE PULLED OUT...
SCREEECH!!!
"AN' THEN THIS OLD RATTLETRAP CUT US OFF!
SMASH!
OH, NO!
"CARJACKERS!
"THE GOLDARN SCUZZBALLS WANTED T' STEAL OUR STOLEN CAR!
"WELL, THAT PO'ED US PLENTY! WE BEGAN TO FIGHT BACK!
"THEN FREEM, THAT WUSS, BAILED ON ME!
"I WAS ALONE.
"AN' THAT DADBLAMED SPRING WOULDN'T LET GO!
"I WAS DEAD.
TAP TAP TAP
"DEAD.
"...
SLAM
"I STARTED TO REALLY FIGHT THEN.
THUMP
"I BIT OFF ONE GUY'S THUMB.
"ANOTHER GUY, I CRACKED HIS RIB LIKE A PENCIL.
WHAM
"THEY WERE CRYIN', SCREAMIN' FOR MERCY.
"I ONLY LAUGHED.
"THEY NEVER HADDA CHANCE!"

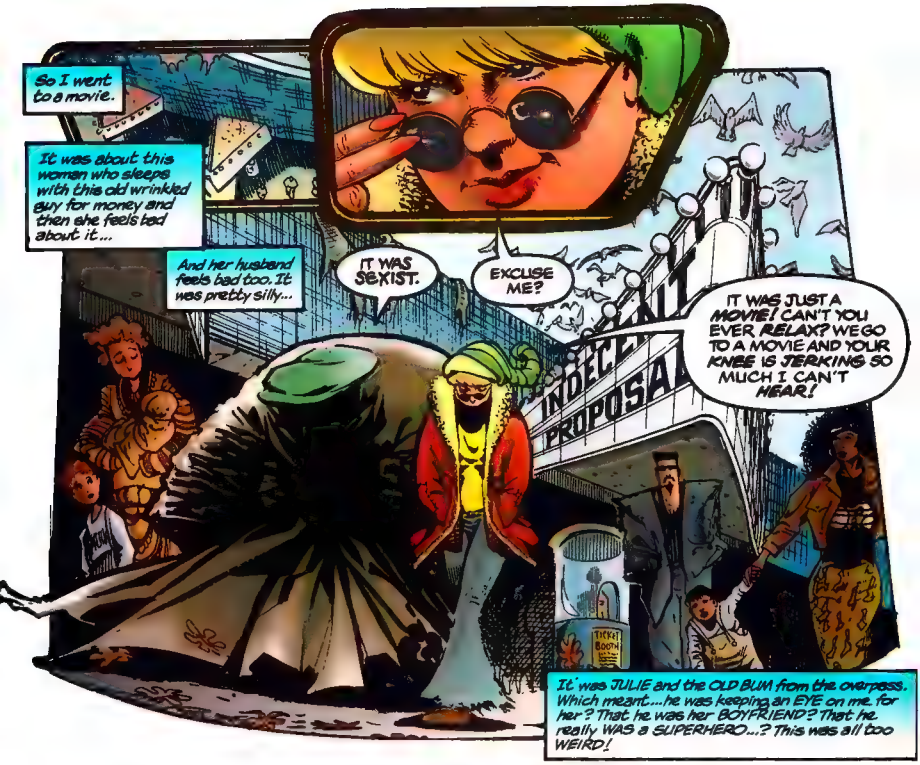
Wasn't that a cool story?
Now, this is the chapter about...
MISS JULIE
She's an old friend of my mother's. I think they went to school together or something. She does this SOCIAL WORKER thing out of her apartment. Very weird.
...I SAID I'D HAVE THE MONEY, MR. BRUNO. I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME PUTTING IT TOGETHER. YOU DON'T HAVE TO EVICT THEM TODAY, DO YOU?
UHHN...
OH, YOU DO, YES, I'M SURE THAT RAT-INFESTED HOVEL IS BEING EAGERLY SOLICITED BY OTHER DESPERATE SINGLE MOTHERS, BUT DO YOU THINK YOU COULD BEAT BACK THE HORDES FOR ONE DAY, WHILE...?
Ah...?
YES, I DO REALIZE THAT YOU ARE LORD KING GOD OF THE UNIVERSE IN YOUR BUILDING, BUT PERHAPS IF I COULD SEE MY WAY TO SWEETEN THE RENT WITH ANOTHER FIFTY...? YOU WILL? YOU'RE A PRINCE AS ALWAYS, MR. BRUNO.
THOSE FUNKY 70
HI, SARAH. YOUR MOM TELLS ME YOU'RE STILL HAVING... TROUBLE.
NO TROUBLE. I'M FINE. HE'S GONE.
QUEEN
SHE SAYS YOU BROOD A LOT. YOU SEEM TO LIVE IN THE PAST.
THIS FROM THE LIVING FOSSIL. LIKE SHE KNOWS WHAT'S R'LLY GOING ON...
I FOUND ONE OF MY DAD'S GUNS LAST WEEK.
IT MADE ME FEEL GLAD TO TOUCH IT. LIKE I WAS NEAR HIM.
SHE KNOWS SHE LOVES YOU, SARAH.
I didn't tell her I've been CARRYING it in my coat pocket. I dunno WHY.

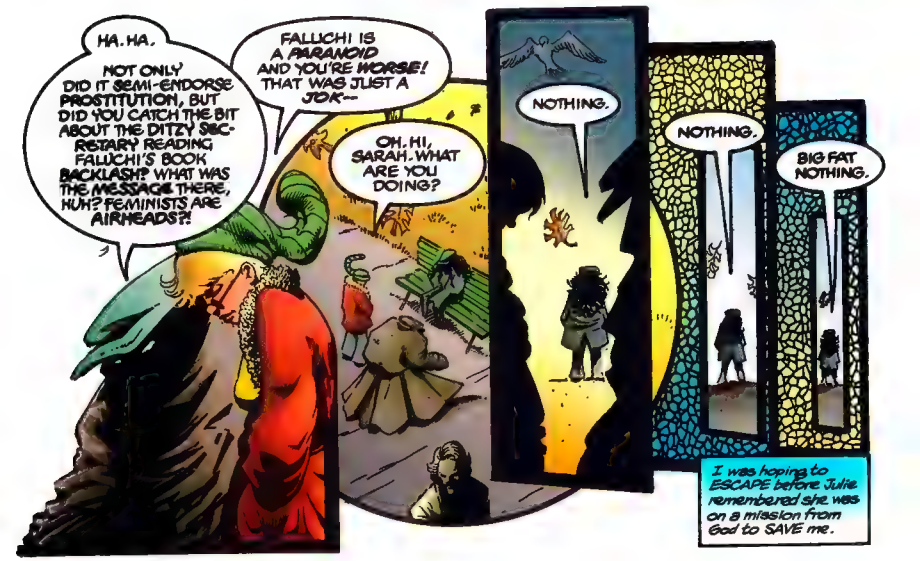

I also dunno WHY my mom makes me talk to Julie. She's not even a REAL therapist...like she's even a REAL social worker!
SO TELL ME HOW YOU'RE FEELING.
WHY? FEELINGS ARE STUPID. END OF STORY.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAVE GOOD REASONS TO THINK FEELINGS ARE STUPID AT THIS POINT IN YOUR LIFE.
OH, YOU MEAN, LIKE, 'CAUSE I'M FAT AND UGLY? AN' HAVE ZITS AN' GLASSES? AN' MOST KIDS MY AGE THINK I'M A JOKE? AN' SO I TRY TO RUN AWAY FROM MYSELF BY SHUTTING EVERYONE ELSE OUT? THOSE KIND OF REASONS?
SARAH, YOU FEEL THAT WAY RIGHT NOW...BUT YOU'LL GROW UP. THIS PAIN WON'T LAST THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT, DO YOU?
YES, I DO.
AND I THOUGHT MOM WAS NAIVE.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOUR FATHER MIGHT HAVE
SHUT UP! DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM!
WHAT DO YOU GET OUTTA THIS? YOU SPEND Y'R OWN MONEY BAILING NOBODIES OUTTA JAIL, TRYIN' TO BUY THEM.
YOU CAN'T HANDLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANYONE YOU'RE NOT CONTROLLING.
HEY, THAT'S ENOUGH--
I DON'T GET YOU, JULIE. Y'R NOT A FAT AN' UGLY KID WITH ZITS AN' GLASSES. BUT OF THE TWO OF US, WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S...
...running from herself?

Finally, Mom showed up.
They had the same old argument.
Steinem!
Paglia!
PAGLIA??!
STEINEM?!?
MISOGYNY disguised as liberalism!
HUMORLESS TOTALITARIANISM!
You're buying into the same old MACHO posturing that's holding us back!
YOU'RE buying into the culture of VICTIMIZATION and staying HELPLESS!
If all they do is FIGHT, then WHY are they still friends? And WHY do I still have to come here?
OBVIOUSLY, they're both nuts.


Like I said, Jimmy and I are EXACTLY alike. We UNDERSTOOD each other.
Like when we went to the STUPID DANCE together.
I'm not a fool. I KNOW what we look like.
We just went for laughs.
Luckily, I don't FEEL hurt or surprised anymore.
When someone turns on the lights...
...it doesn't GET to me.
Just the kind of joke Jimmy an' his pals would play.
Just for laughs.
Luckily, I'm not STUPID. Like I was saying...
...I don't GET hurt anymore.
Yes... lucky me.
YES, EVERYBODY'S GONE. IT'S SAFE TO BE SEEN WITH ME.
SORRY, SARAH, BUT I HAD TO DO IT.
I'M THE SHORTEST GUY IN SCHOOL. THIS IS LIKE MY ONLY CHANCE TO BE, LIKE, COOL.

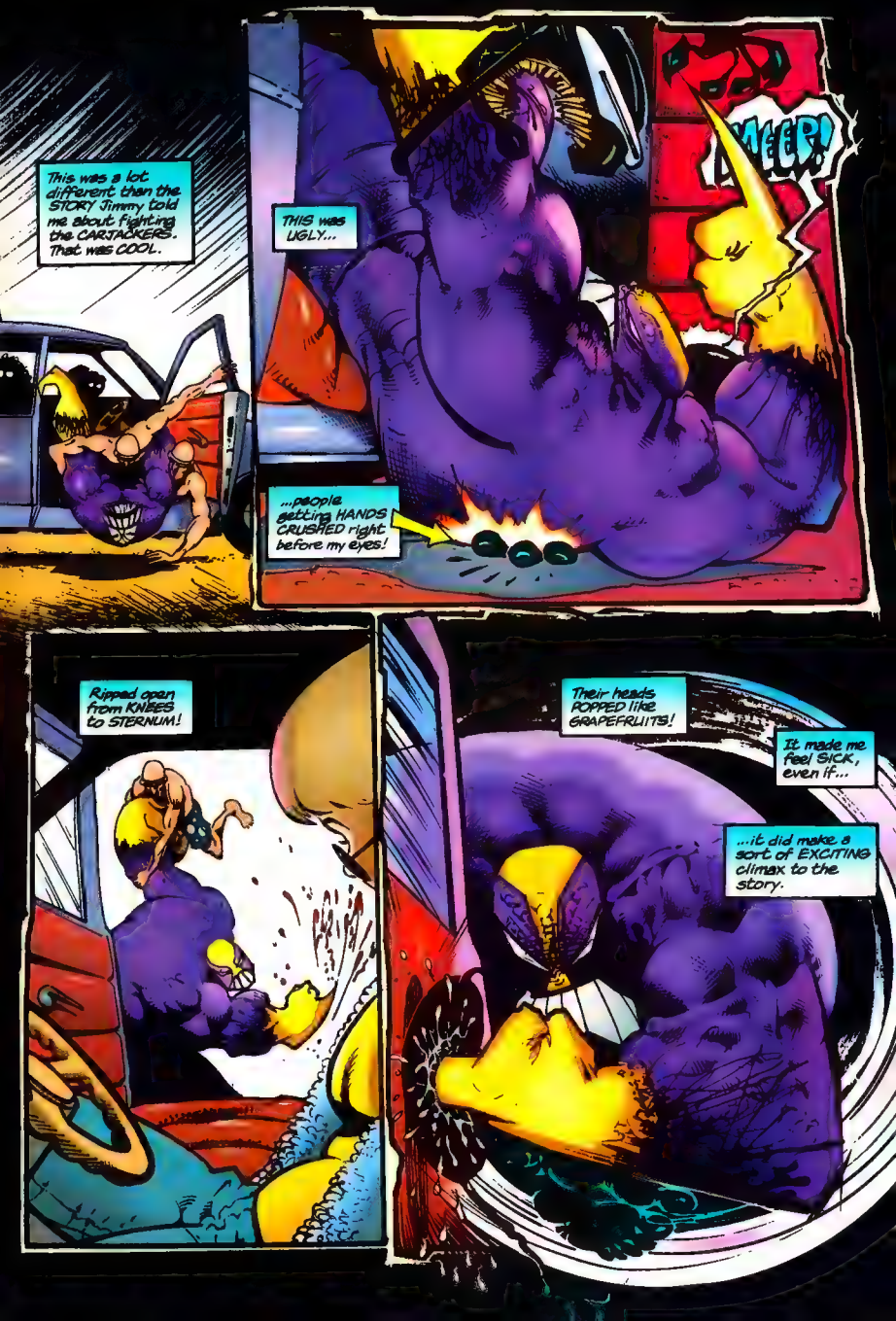

SEE, WE WERE TOGETHER 'CAUSE NOBODY ELSE LIKED US. BUT NOW EVERYBODY WILL LIKE ME.
I KNOW IT'S STUPID TO GIVE UP YOU FOR EVERY-BODY ELSE...
...BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP IT.
BESIDES, WE WERE JUST HAVIN' A LAUGH ...RIGHT?
NOBODY REALLY GOT HURT... RIGHT?
I could feel the gun in my pocket. But even more I could feel the SWEET, HOT HATRED my dad must've felt.
YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, SARAH?
I UNDERSTAND.
YOU AREN'T MAD, RIGHT? 'CAUSE WE C'N STILL BE FRIENDS AN' STUFF, AS LONG AS NOBODY SEES US.
I'M NOT MAD, JIMMY.
And the funny thing was...
...that wasn't a lie.
I wasn't mad. Because in that second I realized that if they had come to ME rather than him, I would've done the same thing.
I think it's an important thing for a writer to know... that she has the potential to be as ROTTEN as everybody else.


So I went to a movie.
It was about this woman who sleeps with this old wrinkled guy for money and then she feels bad about it...
And her husband feels bad too. It was pretty silly...
IT WAS SEXIST.
EXCUSE ME?
IT WAS JUST A MOVIE! CAN'T YOU EVER RELAX? WE GO TO A MOVIE AND YOUR KNEE IS JERKING SO MUCH I CAN'T HEAR!
PROPOSAL
It was JULIE and the OLD BUM from the overpass. Which meant...he was keeping an EYE on me for her? That he was her BOYFRIEND? That he really WAS a SUPERHERO...? This was all too WEIRD!

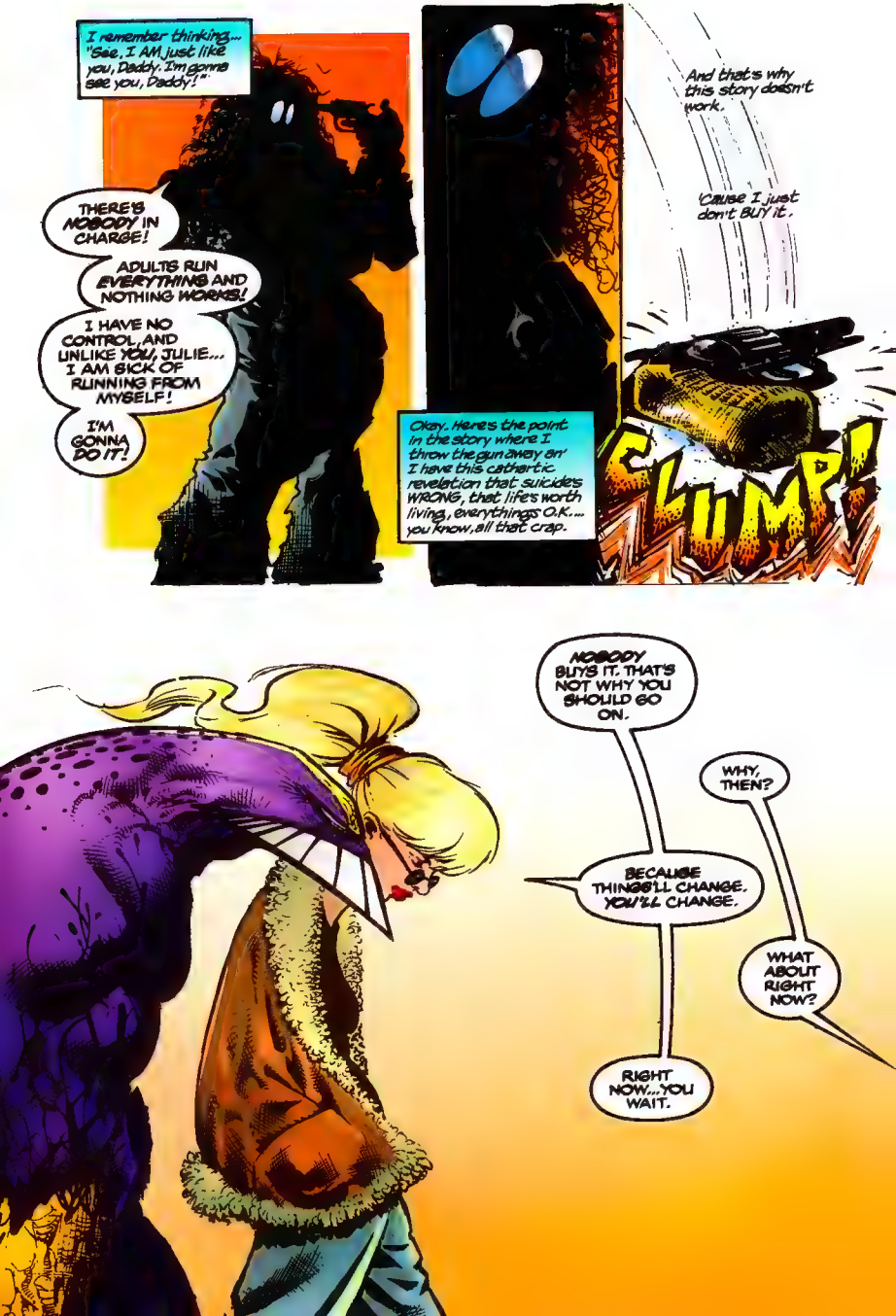

HA. HA.
NOT ONLY DID IT SEMI-ENDORSE PROSTITUTION, BUT DID YOU CATCH THE BIT ABOUT THE DITZY SECRETARY READING FALUCHI'S BOOK BACKLASH? WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE THERE, HUH? FEMINISTS ARE AIRHEADS?!
FALUCHI IS A PARANOID AND YOU'RE WORSE! THAT WAS JUST A JOK--
OH. HI, SARAH. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
NOTHING.
NOTHING.
BIG FAT NOTHING.
I was hoping to ESCAPE before Julie remembered she was on a mission from God to SAVE me.

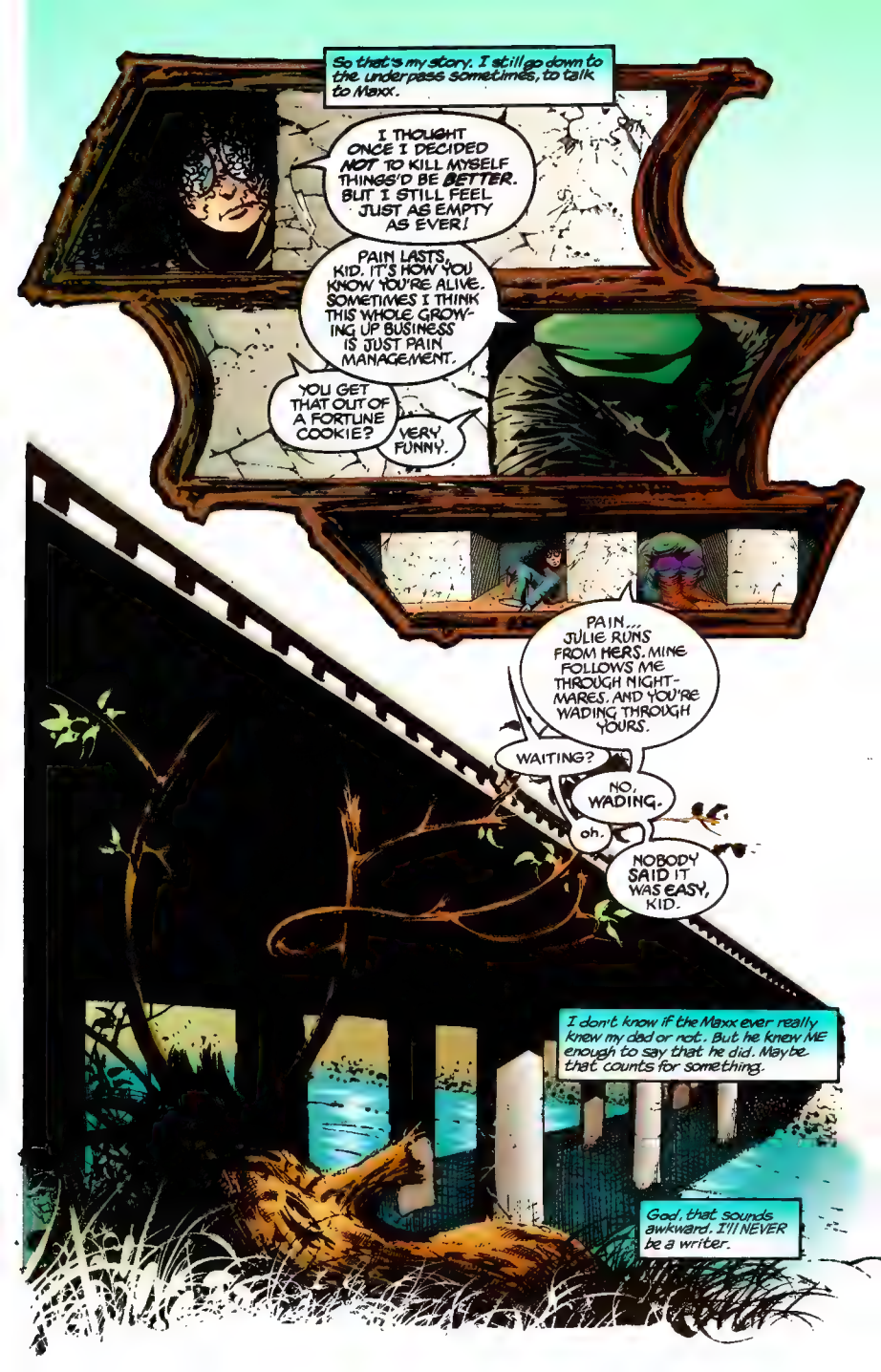
Too late.
HONK! HONK!
SAY, KID... YOU WANT TO GO TO THE AQUARIUM? THEY GOT SQUID.
SURE!
It would drive my mom NUTS if I ran off for hours with Julie and her HOBO boyfriend.
Which is WHY I did it, I guess.
OKAY, KEEDS. NEXT STOP--
CRUNCH
It was the CARJACKERS!
In SPOTTED UNDERWEAR!
Huh?
FREEZE... MEEP! ...SUCKER!
JULIE... WAIT.

...SOMETHING'S WRONG.
Uh-oh. I knew that look in his eyes. He was SEEING THINGS again.
Maybe he'd do something stupid...
Like grab their guns...
Maybe he thought those guys were little blue men or something...
Or pull them into the car...
CRUNCH!
WHUP!
Or something...


This was a lot different than the STORY Jimmy told me about fighting the CARJACKERS. That was COOL.
THIS was UGLY...
...people getting HANDS CRUSHED right before my eyes!
Ripped open from KNEES to STERNUM!
Their heads POPPED like GRAPEFRUITS!
It made me feel SICK, even if...
...it did make a sort of EXCITING climax to the story.

One of them even bounced off a wall like a rubber ball, like a CARTOON character and came screaming through the air, grinning like a shark, straight at MAXX!
SHRIEK!
But he missed.
And when he died, he didn't even look HUMAN at all.
STOP!
SARAH...? PUT THE GUN DOWN, SARAH.
NO! NOTHING MAKES ANY SENSE!
I think it was then that I, SARAH JAMES, lost it.
AND IF IT MAKES ANY SENSE, THEN IT'S ALL GOTTA STOP!
CLICK


I remember thinking... "See, I AM just like you, Daddy. I'm gonna see you, Daddy!"
THERE'S NOBODY IN CHARGE!
ADULTS RUN EVERYTHING AND NOTHING WORKS!
I HAVE NO CONTROL AND UNLIKE YOU, JULIE... I AM SICK OF RUNNING FROM MYSELF!
I'M GONNA DO IT.
Okay. Here's the point in the story where I throw the gun away an' I have this cathartic revelation that suicide's WRONG, that life's worth living, everything's O.K.... you know, all that crap.
And that's why this story doesn't work.
'Cause I just don't BUY it.
CLUMP!
NOBODY BUYS IT. THAT'S NOT WHY YOU SHOULD GO ON.
WHY, THEN?
BECAUSE THINGS'LL CHANGE. YOU'LL CHANGE.
WHAT ABOUT RIGHT NOW?
RIGHT NOW... YOU WAIT.


So that's my story. I still go down to the underpass sometimes, to talk to Maxx.
I THOUGHT ONCE I DECIDED NOT TO KILL MYSELF THINGS'D BE BETTER. BUT I STILL FEEL JUST AS EMPTY AS EVER!
PAIN LASTS, KID. IT'S HOW YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE. SOMETIMES I THINK THIS WHOLE GROWING UP BUSINESS IS JUST PAIN MANAGEMENT.
YOU GET THAT OUT OF A FORTUNE COOKIE?
VERY FUNNY.
PAIN... JULIE RUNS FROM HERS. MINE FOLLOWS ME THROUGH NIGHTMARES. AND YOU'RE WADING THROUGH YOURS.
WAITING?
NO, WADING.
oh.
NOBODY SAID IT WAS EASY, KID.
I don't know if the Maxx ever really knew my dad or not. But he knew ME enough to say that he did. Maybe that counts for something.
God, that sounds awkward. I'll NEVER be a writer.

If you haven't already gotten Maxx 1/2, write WIZARD, 100 Red Schoolhouse Road, Building B-1, Chestnut Ridge, New York 10977. They should have the skinny.

I'm supposed to plug the cassette. Plug, plug. I know what yer thinkin' — sure, there's a cool coupon in this issue for a tape and a glow, but will it show up on time? Eventually — but while you wait, here's a sure fire way to feel great. First, don't read the part where it says 6-8 weeks for delivery. Just pretend it says 3-4 months. Then, when it comes, you'll say (thinking out loud, of course), "Hey! I didn't expect this cool stuff for another three months! (I know, lame joke.) Anyway, hang in there. We want 'em out as much as you do.

The other thing I'm supposed to plug is the Topps card set which is finally done (Whew!) and coming out in October. All mock sincerity aside, I gotta thank Reuben Rude, Ira Friedman, and Don Allan for working their tails off to get these cards done right. It would have been much easier to rush out a crappy set. If you're really a MAXXHEAD, not just a collector, do us a favor and check 'em out...for me...please (beg, whimper.)

P.S. Don't believe any rumors of Maxx being cancelled. (Sorry, it just won't die.) Though it's a little late, you're holding issue #4. Issues 1, 2 and 3 were on time...and so will be #5 (September) and #6 (late October). a mystery project is to be revealed in #7.

Hey, how come everyone draws the Isz better than me?

Dear Sam,
Does — wait, I forgot. Never mind.
Arun Khanna
Berkeley, California

Dear Sam,
Don't you guys ever print Bad News letters? All the fan mail on the letters page is favorable.
Dion Ritter
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Well, Dion, of course we get "bad news" letters. And to show that we're tough and not afraid of criticism, we figure what the heck! We might as well print some right here! But, hey — due to the excessive length of your letter, we've run out of room...

Hey Sam,
I know the bellbottom issue is probably dead already, and you're bored as hell reading about it, but I'm too stubborn to give up. I have one question to give to you - WHY?

Of all the passé '70's fashion statements to resurrect and slap on Julie, why bellbottoms? There must have been something even more repulsive and outdated to give her. How about a pet rock? Or a mood ring? Maybe give her a big old 'fro like that guy on the Mod Squad had. Sheesh. At least she didn't disco.
Sean Ryan
South Orange, New Jersey

OK, everyone over 30 remembers, but for the rest of us: Julie likes COOL '70's things, including Led Zeppelin, lava lamps, and classic rock. She HATES uncool '70's things, including Abba, smiley faces, and disco.

Dear Mr. Kieth and Mr. Loebs,
I was sitting in French 1B, letting my mind wander, when I came upon a most bizarre stream of thought. The class was learning to conjugate the verb mourir (English pronunciation: moo-rear) when a totally off-the wall thought occurred to me. Moo-rear might be interpreted as "cow's butt." Being a rather warped person, I found this quite humorous, but suddenly my mind was swept back to page thirteen of THE MAXX #2. Mr. Gone's toiletry needs are dispensed through the hindquarters of a bovine! THE MAXX and French are totally unrelated, aren't they? Not so. Mr. Gone addresses THE MAXX as "Br'er Lappin." Lappin is French for rabbit. At this point my head is spinning (do you know how much it costs to have your neck

untwisted by a chiropractor?) You may wonder as to the meaning of the word which started this whole mess. What does mourir mean? It's very simple. Mourir means "to die."

Sincerely,
(name withheld by request)

This letter is deep. Very deep. Too deep. Let's see if we can't get a bit more shallow.

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I think I have a theory as to why MAXX is constantly hunched over. You see, if he really is a "street person," then he probably doesn't eat properly and therefore may not be...uh...regular. He would have to remain bent over to keep the cramps at bay...it's just a theory.

There is also quite a controversy over Julie's clothing. Would she be as attractive to men in a sexual way if she wore a business suit? Probably not (tho' Frazier Crane might find her compelling.) But, I have learned through keen observation that people, in general, dress in clothing that they find comfortable and can feel attractive in.

So, does Julie wear her underwear outside her pants because (a) it's the style (sort of like Chaykin's women in American Flagg), (b) she feels comfortable in such attire, or (c) Sam Kieth likes to draw half-naked women. I think it's all of the above. Julie isn't trying to attract anyone.

Now, here's a tougher question. Why does MAXX wear whatever it is that he's wearing? And did you say that thing feeds off his FACE? UGH!!!

Primatively yours,
Jason Bone
Ontario, Canada

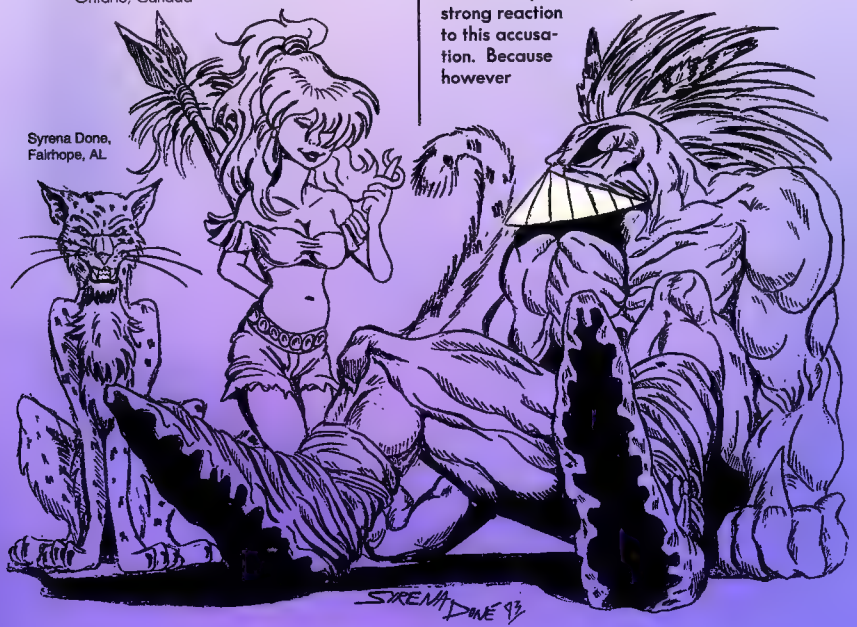
Hm. Why does MAXX wear what he wears? "Cause it makes him feel cheap and dirty? And speaking of...

Dear Mr. Kieth,

I just thought I'd drop a quick note to let you know that you've sparked quite a bit of controversy at my school recently. It started when some of my classmates decided to reproduce your cover to Darker Image #1 on one of our walls net to our artroom. It was a beautiful reproduction that would make you proud. But it appears that not everyone is a fan of your fine work. One of our female teachers found your portrayal of women too sexist (she said the woman was in a subservient position.) So the girl was withdrawn and only Deathblow, Bloodwulf, and of course THE MAXX remained. But then the artists complained of censorship by the teacher, so Julie was going to reappear, but then she wasn't. A compromise was reached and Julie will reappear in a different position on the wall next to the mural. I hope THE MAXX lasts for a long time, and good luck with your career at Image.

Sincerely,
John Burkle
WestLiberty, Iowa

When I first read this letter, I was going to spout some reactionary, politically correct, liberal garbage about freedom of speech and "first wave" repressed feminists NOT forcing their view of women in unflattering contexts...well, you get the idea. But then I thought, wait. Maybe there's something to this. Perhaps that's why I'm having such a strong reaction to this accusation. Because however



imperceptible or unconscious it may be, maybe some kernel of truth about woman's struggle not to be disrespected has reached the dark recesses of my dim, dull brain...then I thought...naaww...

Dear guys,
Maxx is cool.
Keep the mask on.
Keep the feet.
Friend,
Lis Smith
Marblehead,
Massachusetts

Sam,
Thanks, quite possible my favorite book to date, worth the wait. And thanks for portraying Julie as a real person and not as some beautifully air-brushed enhanced object! Julie isn't perfect – that's why we can identify. 'Cuz we're all pretty flawed in our own ways. Julie is run-of-the-mill, and that's OK.

Now level with me Sam. I'm warm, right? Julie's been raped; her memories of this are warped and this fantasy world, which we call home, is all to ease her pain. Somehow our Julie/Queen of the Leopard Women has brought THE MAXX and Gone with her, no? They're each living out their deepest fantasies. Julie helps others, maintains control and further suppresses her pain. THE MAXX gets to be a hero for her. And Gone gets to be even more sick and twisted by punishing the "evil" women of this world.

Anyways, I'm looking forward to seeing it all unfold. The connection between the Leopard Queen and "Br'er Lappin, everyone's role back on Pangaea, more creatures like air whales, Ret'Qark'n, Isz, Gbh'tyts and the crabbit—boy, I can hardly contain myself.

Thanks for Julie once again. Ignoring and/or objectifying doesn't help anyone. You've done neither and for that I applaud you. It's called responsibility as an influential artist/writer.

Prediction: Julie's emotional dam is gonna burst sooner than later. I feel a sadness for her because, in a sense, she represents many girls I know, girls who, like her, have become victims.

Nuff respect,
First-Aid
Huntington Beach, California

Dear Sam,
I think THE MAXX might be Korean. All Koreans like Pez and toast.
Andy "Ducky" Kim
Roswell, Georgia
Huh?

Dear Sam,
Man, if only I could clip Julie's toenails! That MAXX guy is so lucky,
Mark Thibodeaux
Chauvin, Louisiana
This guy's definitely bent.

Dear Sam and Bill,
I just got MAXX #3. It's very...interesting. You guys have definitely created a real mystery, and one that will endure the test of several issues. Oh, and you probably won't have to worry about anyone stealing your ideas, either. They probably can't understand them!
Digital cassette recording of a comic book? Excellent!
Since I know how cool you guys are, and I know how you probably read Groo, you'll print the following, won't you?
Gross is so dumb, he things that Huckleberry Finn is a new flavor of ice cream. (You see, I get a free autographed edition of their graphic novel, The Life of Groo, if I can get a "Groo is so dumb..." joke printed in a non-Groo comic, and you're about the coolest letter column guys I know.)
Sincerely,
John Seavey
Eagan, Minnesota

OK, John, we printed your "Groo is so dumb" letter, but the joke's on you. If you read the letters page of Groo #103, you'll see the rules say it must be a real comic book, so that lets us out! But, let's see how twisted this can get. The first person to get a "MAXX is so dumb he makes Groo look like..." (you finish it) letter published in the Groo letters page gets a signed MAXX #1.

Dear Mr. Kieth,
I find myself boggled when I try to diagnose

MAXX. My theories collapse upon themselves as new issues of MAXX come in. First I thought, "This is easy: New York bum...distorted reality...early childhood trauma ("Mommy")...he's schizophrenic!" Yet Julie then disproved this by the fact that she is the one who creates MAXX as he is in her mind, which then in turn made me think MAXX is only slightly disturbed and that Julie was the big loony. How did her therapy go?

Well, here's my best guess: Julie is repressing her feelings, projecting them on rape victims and societal "losers," rationalizing to herself that she is not a victim ("I have a job, you have a blanker..."), and doing a great job of all of this! In other words, she's a Freudian basket case who could very well have Multiple Personality Disorder because of her repression. Good God, stop me before I go crazy!

Boggled, and maybe clueless,
Jeff Schatz

Interesting. I like this letter...but it makes my brain hurt.

I know I said we were out of room for negative mail, but:

Dear sexist pig (oh, I mean Sam Kieth),

I am writing on the behalf of Mrs. Annette Lopez's letter. Your reply was: "Thanks for writing. It's great to hear from female comic fans."

What's so special about female comic fans? What about us males, huh!! Are you sexist or something? We males have run this earth very successfully without the help of feminists or those damn liberals for thousands of years. Are you aware of the reason women need their own museums and such? The reason is that no one, except for women like Madonna, have done anything that would measure up to what the men of this world have done. Excuse my sexism, but how can it be avoided when my role models have shown me such examples as this example to follow.

From a very proud, MALE, MAXX fan, nice guy, extraordinaire, avant gard, neato keen, spiffy, #$%@ with an attitude problem.
P.S. I'm not gay.
P.P.S You aren't very nice to people of your own sex.
P.P.P.S I love all your wonderful work on the comic.
P.P.P.P.S. Just kidding, glutinous pig.
P.P.P.P.P.S. Is MAXX wearing any clothes or is he naked?

Dear Sam Kieth,

THE MAXX is the greatest. When I picked him up and brought him back to my dorm room, I was not prepared to be so drawn to MAXX or Julia. I have been dealing with a past similar to Julia's for many years. I feel very close to her. She's a heroine and a symbol of hope in my life. MAXX is a warm, caring spirit. I wish Julia and MAXX the best of luck to overcome the pain from the past and the uncertainty of the future. I hope Julia can recapture the spirit of the Leopard Queen.

Thanks,
A.K.
Walnut, California

Dear MAXX creative team,

I'm glad one of the reader letters in #2 touched on THE MAXX's handling of the female body's power, use and presentation. I'm also surprised; the other letters focus on traditional comic book characteristics — the superhero's past, costume, body, etc., while one of the book's truly unique and progressive aspects is its treatment of sexuality.

Julie is truly a contemporary woman — "liberated" by the progression in social attitude but not quite self-realized enough to know how to handle it. In other words, she is a feminist: true feminism is not subscribing to a set of rules (unshaven arm-pits and legs, baggy T-shirt and no bra, no makeup, short hair, etc.) but meeting the responsibility and realities of "liberation" head-on and finding your own peace with them. Unfortunately, this isn't an easy thing to do, hence Julie's conflicting dress and attitude. Obviously, she has a lot of personal growth ahead; give her some consideration.

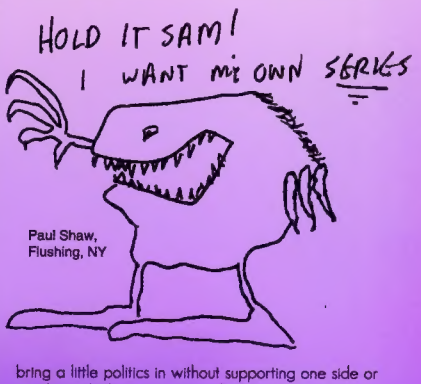
On a final note, I love the fact that Julie dresses like a vamp and still worries about her weight — which , thankfully, is depicted as a realistic little "pot" and not streamlined. At the same time, she is depicted, tummy and all, as a powerful, beautiful Jungle Queen. Perhaps this is the "real" Julie — powerful, confident, beautiful, happy with her body and her self.

Jennifer Holderman
Madison, Wisconsin

Don't be too sure.

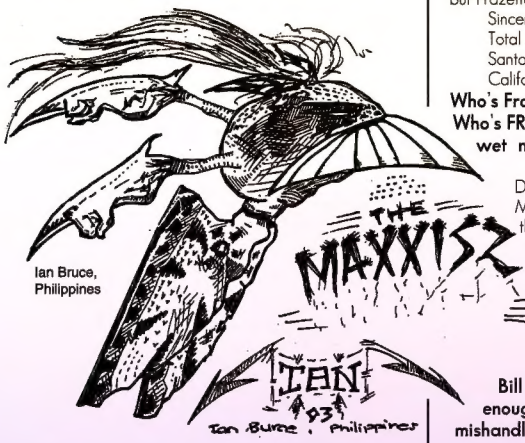
Dear Mr. Kieth,

I like the first issue, based mostly on the art (especially those cute little black creatures) and the concept (schizophrenic personality?) The second issue, though, offered a little something new, character development. Now we know who Julie is. She's a Carmen Paglia feminist. First, I think it's great you can



bring a little politics in without supporting one side or another, which most creators feel the need to do. Most comics can't seem to work politics into a storyline without resorting to either clichés or advocation. Second, I'm glad she's not a Gloria Steinem or Patricia Ireland feminist. As a Rush Limbaugh dittohead, myself, I find Miss Paglia a little more tolerable than the latter two women.

Heidi McDonald brought up some good points. The question of Pagliaism and sexuality is a valid one, especially in an industry of about 90% males. Julie is a wonderfully three-dimensional character. Yes, her clothing is a bit much, at times. But doesn't it fit? She has a valid point in using her sexuality to her advantage. Mr. Gone and Julie talking about women was



Ian Bruce, Philippines

just precious. I hate to say it, but Mr. Gone has some valid points to make there. Women, as viewed through most men's eyes, are an enigma. We have no idea what's going on most of the time. Women love to be flirtatious and yet, at the same time, shy and introverted. Does it make sense that so many wear suggestive clothing, yet when suggestions are made, claim sexual harassment?

But, seriously, #3 was a great issue. So, it turns out there are about five different planes THE MAXX and Julie (in her varied forms) live on, but they never remember the others, just the one they're on. Mr. Gone, however, freely roams all planes, even getting his head chopped off at the end of issue #2 in one plane. We learned more about everyone's favorite supporting character, Julie. It seems she has had some things happen to her that changed her life around. But her current set of beliefs is really just a facade built around her real, true, inner self? Cop out; Why can't she just honestly believe Carmen Paglia? Why do you have to make excuses for it? Ugh.

Angie De Blieck Jr.
North Haledon, New Jersey

I don't think Julie's weird views of reality invalidates her CAMILLE Paglia point of view. If MAXX's beliefs were just a facade, it wouldn't invalidate his favorite things in life (toast and Pez.) I think Paglia's views are every bit as valid as toast and Pez...uh, wait...that didn't quite come out right.

Dear Sam Kieth,

I noticed certain phrases on the wall of THE MAXX'S jail cell in #1 that I have read somewhere else before, maybe in an issue of DC's Sandman book. Hey, is it okay if I mention THE COMPETITION here?

To Heidi McDonald: What are the Paglia and Frazetta things? Is it just me or are lots of people wondering about this? I mean, I've heard of Paglia, but Frazetta9 Who the @$#%& is Frazetta?

Sincerely,
Total MAXX Fan
Santa Barbara,
California

Who's Frazetta?
Who's FRAZETTA?!?!? Whip yourself with a wet noodle, Total.

Dear Maxx,

MAXX is a great book and all but I feel that the themes you are developing are a bit too mature, as is the story content, for many readers. I think that you could do your best work when unleashed under a "mature readers" banner, as proven by your work in Sandman.

Sincerely,
Joe Atalla

Bill and I thought the subject important enough to tackle, even though we risked mishandling it.

Dear Sam,

I detect a slight sililarity between the Isz and Spot , the 7-UP guy. Or vice versa.

Jonah Birns,
Philadelphia, PA

No, Jonah, there's no similarity. You're completely nuts to see one.

To Sam and Bill,

Having just finished reading issue #3 of THE MAXX, I feel compelled to write and offer a few comments on the series so far.

The world of The Maxx is populated by a group of unfortunate and dysfunctional individuals who are forced to transform their inner and outer selves in order to survive their personal traumas. Which brings me to my next point.

Regarding the character of Julia Winters, you have opened up an important issue rarely dealt with in mainstream comics: the terrifying reality of the victims of sexual violence. It is difficult for me to articulate how profoundly sad and touched I am by the last two pages of issue #3. Suffice it to say that I am in complete admiration of the depth, sensitivity, and most importantly, sense of responsibility with which you have handled this tragic topic.

Being a young male, I have learned that one must look inward to the heart of darkness that is the very nature of being male to understand and trans-

form our sometimes horrible potential. Maybe your book can help others to do so, as well.

Peace,
David Kiner
Ontario, Canada

Dearest Sam Kieth,

I am a nineteen-year-old girl/woman who has recently "inherited" custody of my sister's three-year-old daughter. She's beautiful, charming, intelligent, and I love her very much. Added to the rather extensive list of keeping a three-year-old entertained, clean and fed, there are the requisite cleaning, cooking, laundering, and mothering jobs that accompany a household of seven.

I, too, understand (fully embrace) the concept of an alternate world of fantasy and fabrication. I need this to survive; I sincerely believe that it is beneficial to my health. I am an amateur writer in the most extreme use of the word, but if it weren't for that escape, I could not and would not cope.

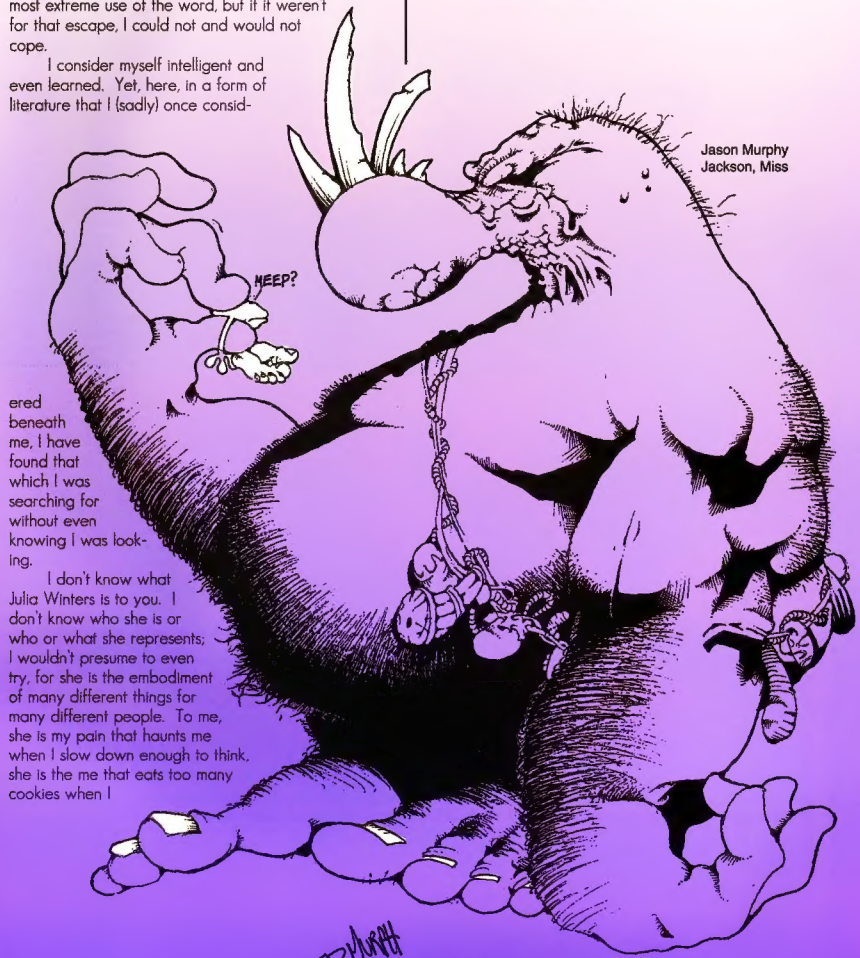
I consider myself intelligent and even learned. Yet, here, in a form of literature that I (sadly) once considered beneath me, I have found that which I was searching for without even knowing I was looking.

I don't know what Julia Winters is to you. I don't know who she is or who or what she represents; I wouldn't presume to even try, for she is the embodiment of many different things for many different people. To me, she is my pain that haunts me when I slow down enough to think, she is the me that eats too many cookies when I know I shouldn't, she is the me that retreats into an alternate world to cry and break down and then return to the real one (but which is which?) and quips that her eyes are red from too much revelry and not enough sleep.

I love her stubble, because we're all prone to get lazy upon occasion; I love her belly, because it is so much like my own; I love her wit, because it is her strongest and most reliable defense. Sarcasm can be stronger than any brick or girding when building a wall.

In short, I am thanking you, Mr. Sam Kieth, for creating that which is beautiful and real and within grasp. As I said, I don't know what she is to you or to your other numerous fans, but to me and my melodramatic flair, she is the light that shines into my soul.

Sincerely,
Mona Lewis
Ashland, Missouri



Jason Murphy
Jackson, Miss